



# U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE

## Remarks by Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky At the Arctic Council Ministerial

Reykjavik, Iceland  
November 24, 2004

Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to congratulate Iceland for its active and innovative leadership of the Council. Over the past two years, you have helped focus our attention on the people living in the Arctic, on the possibilities for closer science cooperation, and on the potential for information and communications technology to advance sustainable development.

In particular, your stewardship of the drafting of the *Arctic Human Development Report* is to be lauded. I am pleased to see its release. The report will more than meet its goal of raising the profile of the people who live in the circumpolar north. It will provide a scientific framework for new work in the Arctic Council's Sustainable Development Working Group. Several scholars at the University of Alaska contributed to the report and others from the United States worked with Iceland to co-edit and direct the project. The report provides the reader with a 360-degree view of how people live in the Arctic -- under various legal systems, with different economic and educational opportunities, and contrasting cultural traditions. Congratulations to Iceland, the Arctic Parliamentarians, and especially to the authors for giving all of us such a comprehensive picture of life in the Arctic.

Another contribution to the literature on potential regional impacts of climate change is the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment. Four years ago, the Council initiated this Assessment to better understand developments in the Arctic. We set out to build on a history of collaboration on Arctic issues -- including contaminants, biodiversity, oil and gas development, infectious disease -- to name just a few. The United States provided approximately \$2 million of the nearly \$3 million needed to prepare the Assessment. And the project enjoyed the financial support of all Member States, the Permanent Participants and several Observers to the Arctic Council.

I wish to recognize the scientists who did the work. We appreciate the Overview document and look forward to receiving the comprehensive underlying science document when it is published early next year. Once the full Arctic Climate Impact Assessment is released, the broader scientific community will have the opportunity to discuss and debate these complex issues. The United States will take the findings into account as it continues to review the science on climate change, as it does with other scientific assessments and information.

As President Bush stated, "We will act, learn, and act again, adjusting our approaches as science advances and technology evolves." The United States is committed to ensuring that our policies are informed by the best information science can provide.

We consider climate change in the Arctic to be an important issue. The United States is involved in a panoply of activities to address climate change in the Arctic, both domestically and in coordination with other nations.

Through our Study of Environmental Arctic Change, or the SEARCH program, a wide range of government agencies, including NOAA, NASA, the National Science Foundation, the Departments of Interior, Defense, Agriculture, Energy and Homeland Security are working to understand the full scope of changes in the Arctic. Government and University scientists are researching exactly how observed changes relate to the Arctic's natural variability.

In their report, Senior Arctic Officials recommended that we "[s]eek to expand and link circumpolar research and monitoring networks, including community based networks...focusing on year round observations of climate and ultraviolet radiation..." We think it is crucial to develop a comprehensive and robust standardized global system for monitoring and observing the earth so that we can forecast environmental conditions and take appropriate actions. Toward this end, the United States hosted the first ever Earth

Observation Summit in July 2003, which gave rise to the Group on Earth Observations addressing perhaps the greatest limitation of our study of climate change. Through hard measurements on the ground, real-time benefits and long-term confidence in these forecasts will be achieved. In fact, our site in Barrow Alaska is the longest running and most comprehensive climate monitoring station in the Arctic.

Our Department of Interior has launched a number of programmatic initiatives in the Arctic. The Alaska North Slope Initiative will provide resource managers and decision-makers the science needed to make sound decisions that protect and sustain natural systems. We also have programs focused on the walrus and polar bears to monitor population status and trends, and develop new techniques for surveying these remote and hard to count species. In addition, we are using remote sensing technologies to help determine the influence of climate variability on Barren Ground Caribou Herds. And our National Park Service preserves nearly 54 million acres in Alaska. These regions are home to diverse terrestrial species that have the potential to sequester large amounts of carbon from the atmosphere.

U.S. commitment to the Arctic is strong. Since 2002, we have spent nearly \$845 million on Arctic activities. We are working within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and elsewhere to develop an effective and science-based global approach to climate change that ensures continued economic growth and prosperity for our citizens and for citizens throughout the world.

And we will continue to work in partnership with other countries to address greenhouse gas emissions. In fact, many of our Arctic Council partners have joined us in a number of our multilateral climate change technology initiatives. These include:

The Carbon Sequestration Leadership forum -- which aims to develop cost effective technologies for capturing and storing carbon dioxide before it enters the atmosphere;

The International Partnership for the Hydrogen Economy -- which will develop the technology needed for the transformation to a hydrogen economy;

The Methane to Markets Partnership -- which aims to capture and use methane as a profitable energy resource and begin, perhaps within a decade, to bring down atmospheric concentrations of this second most important greenhouse gas.

These initiatives make up just a part of the Bush Administration 's \$5.8 billion request for science, technology and market-based approaches to address climate change.

For the past ten years, the Council has been a unique and effective forum bringing governments and civil society representatives together to share information about important Arctic issues. In 2002 during the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the United States highlighted the Arctic Council as a model international public-private partnership for sustainable development. We are pleased to be such an active participant in its range of activities.

We look forward to continuing this spirit of cooperation during the upcoming chairmanship of the Russian Federation. Russia 's vast experience with Arctic issues will be invaluable to the Council 's work over the coming years.

Thank you.

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